

Brookline Preservation Commission

Demolition Application Report

Address: 77 Thorndike Street
Applicant: Mark Linsky
Building Type: House (Full)
National Register Listing (if Applicable): N/A



Historical/Architectural Significance:

The house was constructed in 1895 by developer David H. McKay. McKay was born in New Brunswick, Canada, and entered the real estate business upon moving to Boston. In 1889 McKay purchased a 7 ½ acre farm between Harvard and Winchester Streets, subdividing it and laying out lots for 46 houses on standard lots of about 60' x 80'. In 1895 McKay purchased 32 acres known as Babcock Hill, east of Harvard Street, creating 143 lots. McKay developed many of these homes himself while also selling individual lots or sections to others. McKay contracted architects to design the exterior of the homes in Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Shingle styles; designs were rarely repeated within the development. The interiors, which he designed himself, were organized to maximize household convenience, offering built-in pantries, laundry facilities and a combination of gas and electric lights. This is the largest known development undertaken by a single individual in Brookline's history. Constructed after the completion of the Beacon Street electric trolley line in 1889, the area is a fine example of a "streetcar suburb", constructed to appeal to those commuting to Boston for work. McKay moved to Brookline with his wife Martha and four children when the development began; the family resided at 143 Winchester Street. After McKay's death in 1898, Martha continued to own many of the homes in the development, renting them out; she had sold off the remaining lots by 1900.

McKay conveyed the newly constructed property to Emma C. Bubier in June of 1896. Emma resided in the property with her husband, Joseph, a physician, their two sons, her mother, a boarder, and a servant until Joseph's passing in 1902, although she retained ownership until at least 1927. A 1920 application for a Lodging House License for the address notes Bubier was the owner of the property and Ms. Eliza A. Harrison oversaw 16 lodgers on the premises.

The house at 77 Thorndike Street was constructed as a single family residence as part of the large Babcock Hill development. The architect of this house, John H. Hasty, also designed 104, 111-115, and 147 Coolidge Street and 88 and 111 Thorndike for David McKay. The building is a 2 ½ story side gable, Dutch Colonial Revival dwelling that rises from a stone foundation to an asphalt roof. This is a particularly early example of the side-gable orientation, as most Dutch Colonial Revival buildings constructed during this period were front-gabled to accommodate the narrower lots

traditionally found in early streetcar suburbs. McKay elevated the streetcar suburb by offering his residents larger lots and high-style, bespoke residences featuring fashionable Victorian-era architectural elements, including the full-height projecting bay, expansive porch, and pedimented dormers found on this building. Although much of the historic fabric was removed in the twentieth century, the building retains its original massing and many of its most significant character defining features and remains a good example of early development in the Babcock Hill neighborhood.

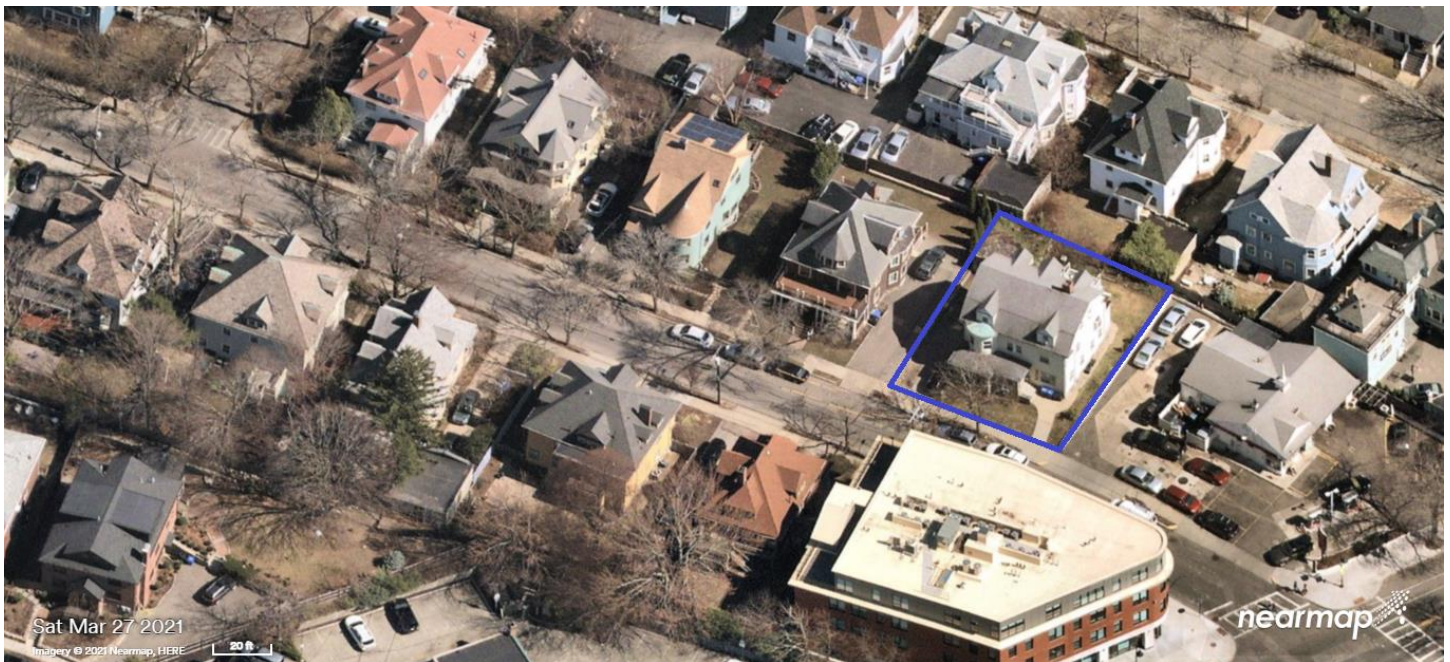
The house has undergone extensive changes since its construction. Changes to this house over the years include conversion to a two-family dwelling in 1960, the installation of aluminum siding in 1968, and the replacement of thirty-two windows with fiberglass windows in 1998. Although no permits exist for the additions at the rear of the building and the enclosing of a portion of the front porch, stylistic evidence supports the fact that these were later alterations.

The house at 77 Thorndike Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the town or Commonwealth; and

d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The building at 77 Thorndike Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, and feeling.



Aerial view of 77 Thorndike Street, looking east.



Aerial view of 77 Thorndike Street, looking west.



Aerial view of 77 Thorndike Street, looking north.



Aerial view of 77 Thorndike Street, looking south.



View 1 of the façade from Thorndike Street, taken by staff October 2021



View 2 of the façade from Thorndike Street, taken by staff October 2021



View of the rear, taken by staff October 2021



View of the north elevation,
taken by staff October 2021



Photo of the south
elevation, taken by staff
October 2021

	<p>1. Town <u>Brookline</u></p> <p>Name of area (if any) <u>McKay Development</u></p> <p>3. General date or period <u>1890-1905</u></p> <p>4. Is area uniform (explain):</p> <p>in style? <u>Mostly Colonial Revival, Queen Anne and Shingle variations</u></p> <p>in condition? <u>No - some houses are well kept, some covered with siding and</u></p> <p>in type of ownership? <u>otherwise altered</u></p> <p><u>All privately owned</u></p> <p>in use? <u>All are residential in use</u></p>
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Excerpts from BLK.H, the McKay Development Area, obtained from Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System. McKay development in 1888 (top) and 1979 area survey boundaries (bottom)

